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AUTHOR	Teitel, Lee
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ABSTRACT

In 1992, Massachusetts's Department of Education established five regional alliances throughout the state to support middle-school restructuring and reform. The project began with 50 schools and colleges and grew to include 11 alliances comprised of more than 165 schools and colleges. A statewide case study that describes the alliances, the professional development programs they run for teachers and administrators, how they were organized and funded, the impact their work has had on changes in classroom teaching, and their evolving relationship with the DOE is described in this paper. The case chronology focuses on implementation and includes governance issues, organizational challenges, and descriptions of professional development offerings the alliances have provided. The research is qualitative, using multiple perspectives of the events that are described and analyzed. Data were collected through short interviews and observations at the statewide organizational meeting that inaugurated the alliances, at the semiannual meetings of all the individual alliances' steering committee officers, at the statewide annual conferences, and at several alliance steering committee meetings. The data show that faculty participating in the alliances reported more involvement in professional development activities, an increased willingness to change their teaching, and a more positive attitude toward teaching. (RJM)

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Empowering People as a Matter of Policy: Five Years of Success of a State-Initiated Regional Alliance Network for Middle School Restructuring.

Lee Teitel
University of Massachusetts Boston

Paper presented at the AERA Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, April 14, 1998

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Empowering People as a Matter of Policy: Five Years of Success of a State-Initiated Regional Alliance Network for Middle School Restructuring.

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In 1992, a state department of education (DOE) launched an ambitious project that established five Regional Alliances throughout the state to support middle school restructuring and reform. Beginning with about 50 schools and several affiliated colleges, the network has grown to include eleven Alliances comprised of more than 165 schools and colleges -- over a third of the middle schools in the state. From their inception, the Alliances were an experiment in bottom-up participatory change, locally run, with substantial involvement of teachers and administrators and with considerable autonomy from the DOE. Setting up the Alliances was part of an attempt by the Department to "re-invent" itself, moving away from its bureaucratic regulatory history to develop a flexible model supporting schools and districts in education reform and restructuring and recognizing that school reform comes from within. The Regional Alliances are widely viewed by DOE staff and by participants in the schools as one of the Department's most successful initiatives. Most Alliances are run by teachers (a few are run more by administrators) and they offer a popular array of professional development workshops, study groups, and opportunities for cross-visitation and exchange. Schools buy in for fee (usually $1000) that entitles them to participate in all Alliance activities for the year; this money is supplemented by the state DOE and sometimes further augmented by specific targeted grants. The success of the initiative is measured not only by the exponential growth of the Middle Grades Alliance Network, but by the addition three years later of High School and Elementary Alliance networks, each of which has also rapidly grown.

This paper provides a state-wide case study that describes the Alliances, the professional development programs they run for teachers and administrators, how they were organized and funded, the impacts their work has had on changes in classroom teaching, and their evolving relationship with the state DOE. The case chronology focuses on implementation --what organizational challenges the Alliances faced and how each managed, with minimal guidelines from the DOE, to set up a functioning organization that met the local professional development needs of the region. The case includes governance issues, organizational challenges and descriptions of the types of professional development offerings Alliances have provided. It tells the story of an unusual model of state level empowerment for local level initiative.

Research Methodology

The research is primarily qualitative in its approach, using multiple perspectives on the events that are described and analyzed. Data were collected through short interviews and observation at the state-wide organizational meeting that inaugurated the Alliances in 1992, at the semi-annual meetings of all the individual Alliances' steering committee officers, at the state-wide annual conferences, and at several Alliance steering committee meetings. In addition, written materials were examined: DOE

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memoranda to the participating institutions, their reports to the DOE, etc. These sources were supplemented by more than fifty semi-structured interviews (average 20-30 minutes) with participants active in the Alliances and with the coordinators and staff at the Department of Education. As the Alliances grew, an annual written survey was employed to assess participant viewpoints and the impacts they saw on their classrooms and schools.

Part 1 Start-up of the Regional Alliances

In December of 1991, the Department of Education issued a concept paper calling for establishment of the Middle Grades Regional Alliance Network, with the goal of "Improving the middles grades through collaborative professional development." The paper outlined a vision of what Regional Alliances (RA) might look like and described a series of steps, to take place during the first six months of 1992, to turn the vision into a reality.

During January, February and March, the DOE staff distributed the concept paper, solicited applications, and fielded inquiries. Information about the Alliance project was mailed to all middle schools, educational collaboratives, and colleges with teacher preparation programs in the state. Staff explained that each institutions would be expected to buy in to the Alliance for a thousand dollars; and that this money would be supplemented by a five thousand dollar grant to each Alliance. The Department staff was pleasantly surprised by the positive response, especially given the tight fiscal climate and the need of institutions to contribute their own money to this venture. However, initial responses from urban middle schools were low, so members of the Department and of the project's Advisory Committee actively solicited applications from urban schools. All applicants were accepted and were grouped geographically by Department staff. By April, the DOE was able to bring together 45 middle schools, 4 institutions of higher education and one collaborative to a full day Institute to actually inaugurate the Alliance network.

The "Kick-off" Institute Day

At the institute day, the schools were assigned into geographical clusters and these newly formed Alliances were charged with four tasks. Over the next month or two, Alliances were told to:

1- Establish a governance structure. The DOE recommended a steering committee with two members from each school, meeting once a month, but left the decisions and details of the structure up to the individual alliances.

2- Select a coordinating institution that would, as a minimum, serve as the treasurer and fiscal conduit, but might also facilitate steering committee meetings. Once again details were left to the Alliances, as was the selection of the institution.

3- Plan an annual calendar of professional development events, basing it on a needs assessment survey. The Department offered a survey instrument, but invited institutions to modify it or substitute their own.

4- Develop a budget for Alliance activities, based on the recommended one thousand dollar buy-in and approximately five thousand dollar total contribution from the state.

Participants were told the state would also provide technical assistance and at least one annual institute day for all Alliances and were left to get organized (with some initial facilitation from a DOE staff member). It turned out that, despite concept papers and advance literature, many of the teachers and administrators present had only the vaguest idea of what an Alliance was; many, in fact, came to the meeting believing it was a conference on effective strategies for middle schools, not realizing it was the inaugural event for an on-going Alliance. (Comments like: "Why are we here?" "What's an alliance?" "This is mind-boggling" were frequently heard during the morning session.) Even those who came prepared to form a network faced the obstacle, in most cases, of not knowing the other players from their regions. So the day was one of multiple agendas: confirming (or developing) buy-in to the project, getting to know one another, beginning to form relationships and structures that could actually breathe life into the RA concept.

Although there was some initial confusion, for most participants, the tasks became clearer and more manageable once the people in the Alliances got to know one another. As one put it "Initially I was overwhelmed at the major task ahead. After meeting with our own alliance, I became much more relaxed. I'm excited to be part of it . . ." Participants also noted how their initial expectations (at first "I felt this was going to be another exercise in bureaucracy") gave way to positive feelings of enthusiasm and hope. In fact, although the feedback expressed by the participants was mixed on the process of the day, with many concerned that the morning general session was not as productive as their time once they got into Alliances, overall participants were very positive about the end product. About two thirds of the participants used words like "excited," "hopeful," "enthusiastic" in their summary comments about the day. Several volunteered that "we are launched," or "we are on our way" or "ready to roll" in describing the state of their Alliance. Despite a few minor glitches, the one-day session was remarkably successful in advancing the multiple agendas required. Virtually all the participants emerged focussed, committed, and enthusiastic about the project.

The First Few Months

In the next few months, each of the five Alliances met two or three times to continue the organizing work they had begun. They made decisions about organizational structures and selected a coordinating institution (in many cases the participating college) as a fiscal conduit. Some had to deal with membership issues, including needing to establish a process for accepting or rejecting additional member institutions, or for dealing with questions about accepting in-kind payments instead of cash from institutions eager to participate but lacking the necessary cash.

Alliances began assessing the professional development needs of their own schools, in most cases using the survey instrument provided as a model by the DOE. Most Alliances collated and discussed the survey results, with many expressing excitement over the similarities of expressed needs among the member schools. By the end of June most had at least a rough outline of a plan for a professional development calendar for the coming school year.

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Beyond the general guidelines laid out by the Department, each Alliance exercised considerable autonomy in setting up membership criteria and benefits, in planning a professional development calendar, in deciding how to govern itself. A variety of organizational structures emerged. In one case decisionmaking was split, with half of the members involved in a governance group (composed mostly of administrators) and the rest in a predominantly teacher-run professional development committee. Others chose to rotate the chairing role of the steering committee.

Planned activities included joint conferences, newsletters, inter-visitations, sharing sessions over dinners, teacher exchanges, and a directory of member schools identifying strengths as well as weaknesses in particular areas. In many cases, Alliances tried to coordinate their next year's early release in-service schedules. When that was not possible, they tried to arrange for substitute release time so at least some teachers from a school might attend a given event. In most cases, Alliances chose to focus on a particular topic and to organize a range of activities and options around the theme. Popular topics included inter-disciplinary units, changing belief structures about student learning, scheduling, clustering, effective discipline, common planning time. One Alliance planned a large initial session, complete with a big name "draw" where teachers would choose among a host of follow-up topics and approaches. Another Alliance planned a "theme of the month," which was presented in the newsletter, followed up with a conference, and then continued with some hands-on experiences and exchanges. A few common aspects to most of the plans were a high level of excitement and enthusiasm; a strong belief that member institutions could help each other, without the need for many outside experts; and a belief in the importance of teacher choices for professional development and the need for supporting teacher-to-teacher contact as a way to help change classroom practice.

As the individual Alliances evolved over the first few months, department staff met with each Alliance, providing information, access to resources, and some minimal facilitation and guidance to the leadership that had emerged. The facilitators made clear that they were not running the meetings, and in general took a back seat unless asked for help. They were there to help assure that the "agenda is in synch with the Department's goals and wishes" but beyond that, the Alliances had considerable lattitude and autonomy.

Although their organizing structures evolved differently, their plans took somewhat different shapes, and were in different stages of completion, the five Alliances had in common their sustained enthusiasm, focus, and commitment. In this sense, by the summer of 1992, the start-up of the Middle Grades Regional Alliance Network was well on its way, tapping in and unleashing the creativity and enthusiasm of middle grades teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. At the core of it was a decentralized approach that placed real value on what school-based educators knew and could do. Participants expressed strong praise for the roles of the DOE in helping keep them on track and in providing resources -- potential speakers, legal advice, and so on. The many positive comments on the role of the state in starting this project but then letting go of it are typified by this comment:

> It's almost like they're saying "You make your alliance work since you'll be in the trenches with it." They are letting us decide our own needs

and yet helping us get through the start-up process. [The Department is acting toward us] like a good teacher.

Part II The Second and Third Years

When the Regional Alliance initiative was begun in the Spring of 1992, Department staff were worried about whether schools would be willing to pay a thousand dollars for a new approach to professional development. The Department, after all was providing a bit of seed money and an organizing structure, but not much else. The rest would come from the schools, including a sizeable chunk of their own money. It was a self-help model, different from most things run by the DOE, with only minimal direction or involvement from the state.

Contrary to the concerns of the DOE staff, the response to the Alliances was extremely enthusiastic. Within two years, the original schools and colleges had more than doubled and the number of Alliances has swelled from six to eight, with a prospect for a ninth. With more than 100 middle schools involved in 1993-94, the Alliances were reaching over one fourth of all middle schools in the state. The "self-help" model had been very popular; and the high levels of autonomy led each Alliance to develop a unique "personality" and focus. Emerging governance and funding issues, the nature of professional development offerings, and the evolution of the DOE role are described below.

Governance and funding

At the April, 1992 Department of Education Institute which began the Alliances, each group was asked to establish a governance structure of its own. Most followed the Department's recommendation of a steering committee with two members from each school, meeting once a month. Many schools sent a teacher and a principal, but some Alliances evolved to being mostly teachers or mostly principals on the governing committee. Some schools sent one permanent member and one rotating member (to provide continuity but also engage others in the school). Other Alliances rotated the location of their meetings, and then had each meeting chaired by a member of the host school (usually the principal). To plan the professional development activities, some Alliances used sub-committees of the steering committee; others have set up professional development committees (usually mostly, or entirely, composed of teachers) to plan events.

To handle their finances, each Alliance identified a fiscal conduit and assessed and collected membership fees of $1000 per institution. Each Alliance received approximately $15,000 from the state -- more than had been anticipated due to some grant opportunities the state steered to the Alliances. Within the broad guidelines of the grants, each Alliance had considerable flexibility in how to disburse these monies. Each Alliance also had considerable autonomy in setting up membership criteria and benefits, in planning a professional development calendar, in deciding how to govern itself. Alliances have also proven to be very cost-effective, providing enormous returns on the thousand dollar membership fee. As one principal put it, "I got ten thousand dollars in staff development for the thousand dollars I paid." Some districts have realized this and are using their Alliance as a primary source of professional development for their middle schools. Because

Alliances received funding from the state as well as additional grants, they were relatively well-off financially. Several Alliances were willing and able to "give back" substitute days -- in one case offering 17 days of sub money for attendance at Alliance activities, which virtually offset the thousand dollar fee to participate.

Approaches to professional development

A few key elements cut across virtually all the professional development programming in all the Alliances. One is the important role of teachers in every step of planning and implementing the professional development activities: From the initial needs assessment to teacher-run professional development committees, to utilizing teachers as resources in presentations and sharing. A second is the ongoing nature of many of these activities. Relatively few have been one-time events without any follow-up. A third is the use of others in the Alliance as resources -- as presenters, as consultants, as colleagues.

The range of professional development activities has been quite extraordinary and the collaborative structures themselves seemed to have become quite strong. The balance of this section provides a brief summary of the activities of the Alliances during this period:

By the third year, hundreds of Alliance-sponsored activities were taking place. Although no one blueprint emerged for the activities of each of the Alliances, most use some sort of kick-off event in the Fall, with a keynote speaker, at which the professional development options for the year were introduced. Creativity, flexibility, and teacher input have been the guiding principles for the professional development activities. The formats (which were widely shared and imitated around the state) included:

-- Presentations and workshops, usually focusing on topics identified as priorities in the needs assessments; while some of these use outside "experts," many use teachers as presenters.

-- Dinner meetings (known in one Alliance as "Cheers") bring together teachers for a short presentation, a nice meal, and lively discussion.

-- "Chalk Talks" and other informal teacher-to-teacher get-togethers have been held, some on a one-shot basis, but many as series which focus on sharing some aspect or technique of teaching. In some Alliances teachers have met for several all-day sessions over the year to address a particular issue.

-- School tours have been used to help showcase the schools which host the meetings, often providing rare opportunities for teachers and administrators to see how other schools are set up.

-- Variations on "Job alike" sessions have been popular, with some Alliances using a "cracker barrel" model where a teacher from a specific area or cluster accompanies the steering committee representative on the day of the steering committee meeting.

-- Some Alliances used newsletters to accompany a professional development calendar and other fliers and brochures for activities; others use directories to help link people with common interests.

-- Alliances used "Help Wanted" posters and set up study groups which are supported by mini-grants.

--Others have had a range of mini-grants teachers can apply for: for professional development materials, for connecting research to practice, for interdisciplinary instruction, for workshop presentations, for school visitations, and so forth.

-- Some Alliances have opted for closing "finales" to "end the year on a positive note."

Overall the professional development subcommittees of each Alliances have tried hard to make something interesting and accessible for each of the teachers and administrators, using a "smorgasbord" approach: if an individual is not interested in a workshop in grant-writing, possibly s/he will want join colleagues for a "Cheers" session at the local restaurant, or pick up an "Interdisciplinary Lesson To Go."

Evolution of the relationship with the Department of Education

During this period the Department organized large annual spring professional development meetings for members of all the Alliances, as well as two sessions a year for the steering committee members to share ideas and strategies on how to most effectively work in an Alliance. In keeping with the DOE "self-help" model, most of the steering committee sessions were facilitated by one of the steering committee heads, with DOE staff on hand to organize the session, answer questions, and provide technical support. The conversations were far ranging, and provided opportunities for participants to ask of each other very specific questions, such as:

What professional development opportunities work best?
How do you best utilize your college partner?
Should you cap your membership?
How do you deal with non-payment of dues?
What is the best way to handle the money?
Can you get audited?
What can you buy with Alliance money?

By the third year, Alliances, had generally stabilized their structures, allowing them to feel increasingly independent of the DOE. As one steering committee chair put it, in response to a question from another Alliance chair about applying for specific targeted grants offered by the DOE with very short notification and deadlines:

We're totally independent now. We don't even have to apply for these targeted grants. I told [DOE administrator] that if all you provide is a few thousand dollars, we'll go our own way. We pushed back on the short time lines and said we wouldn't do it. The DOE extended [the deadline].

When asked later if there might come a time when Alliances could sustain

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themselves without DOE support, the chair responded: "We're already there."

At the big annual Regional Alliance meetings in May, over 150 teachers, principals and community members came to look at the displays and participate in a wide range of activities. The format for the day mirrored the approach and philosophy of the Alliances. The plenary activities were brief, with most of the day spent in a wide range of activities, including presentations by various Alliances on their activities, and sessions focused on specific topics --job-alikes for teachers of particular subject areas, for principals, and so forth.

Part III Year Four and Beyond

The Regional Alliances have continued to steadily grow. By 1995 two new Alliances started, bringing the total to 10 Alliances with 112 middle schools (more than a quarter of the approximately 400 schools with middle grades programs in the state). Each Alliance received $25,000 in a variety of grants from the state. In addition, most Alliances were still charging $1,000 per school, although some have reduced fees for longer-standing members, or waived them for in-kind services.

The new Alliances have benefited greatly from the experience of the earlier ones. Steering committee members and chairs from newly formed or forming Alliances have attended the conferences, been coached by others at steering committee state-wide meetings, received materials and handouts. Members from established Alliances have gone to steering committee meetings of the new ones to provide support and ideas.

Spread of involvement in the Alliances

In addition to the steering committee member meetings, the DOE continued to sponsor an annual conference, which has grown in size and scope each year. Typically, there would be a minimum of plenary activity, with most of the days dedicated to having multiple opportunities for Alliance members to learn from each other about middle school practices they were implementing in their schools. At one of the Alliance conference (April 1995) participants were asked to complete a survey asking for their views on how much involvement they, and others in their school, have had with the Alliance and what impacts it has had. Of the estimated 175 people in attendance, 95 responded to the questionnaire (54.3% response rate). Seventy nine identified themselves as teachers, 14 were administrators, and two did not identify themselves. Almost half of the teachers (37 or 46.8%) were on their Alliance's planning or steering committee, as were nine of the administrators (64.2%) Respondents were asked how many years their school had been involved in the Alliance. Twelve teachers and one administrator were in their 1st year in the Alliances; 28 teachers and two administrators were from 2nd year schools. Schools in their third year had the greatest number of teachers (33) and the highest proportion of administrators (11, or 78.6% of the administrators responding).

Respondents were asked in how many Alliance events they had participated since the school year began, and to estimate how many faculty members in their schools had. To enable comparisons over length of involvement, the respondents are broken out by year of school's involvement -e.g. first, second or third.

How many Alliance events, activities, or workshops have you participated in since September 94?

	This is the first	2 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 -20	more than 20
First year schools	5	5	0	3	0	0
Second year schools	3	14	7	2	2	1
Third year schools	2	21	11	3	6	4

What fraction of the faculty at your school would you estimate have taken part in <u>at least one</u> Alliance-sponsored event or activity this year?

	Less than 1/3	Between 1/3 and 2/3	More than 2/3
First year schools	6	6	1
Second year schools	8	12	7
Third year schools	7	16	21

What fraction of the faculty at your school would you estimate have taken part in <u>five or more</u> Alliance-sponsored events or activities this year?

	Less than 1/3	Between 1/3 and 2/3	More than 2/3
First year schools	11	1	0
Second year schools	23	1	3
Third year schools	29	13	3

What stands out in looking at these data is the increase in depth and breadth that seems to come about with additional time involved in the Alliances. The first table shows the considerably greater number of activities engaged in since the start of the school year by individuals in second and third year schools. This shows up as well in the estimations of what fraction of the faculty has been engaged. The data for one or more events show how dramatically this rises, so that 84% of the participants from third year schools report that more than a third of their faculties are involved in at least one event; and almost half (21 out of 44) report that more than two thirds are engaged. Similar patterns are revealed by the data on those involved in five or more events. These numbers support something that often comes up in interviews --that especially in early stages, often a small core of faculty is really taking advantage of Alliance activities, beyond a one-time event like a kick-off. With the passage of time, involvement patterns seem to be changing with Alliance participation becoming more widespread in the school.

Conclusion

The state Department of Education has done an excellent job of getting the Regional Alliances started. The DOE created the conditions for teachers and administrators in the schools and colleges to customize the Alliances so they have met local needs. The state played a critical convening role, and continued to support this endeavor in ways that manage to strike the right balance between under-and over-structuring the project. By doing so, the Department has been able to tap into a high level of commitment and enthusiasm on the part of the middle school educators in the state. The Department has, with relatively little money, managed to leverage a process that appears to be leading to a great deal of action and potential for change and improvement of middle grades education.

Although assessing the impacts of these professional development activities on the classroom falls outside the scope of this research, there are some (admittedly, self-report) data that indicate some important impacts. In the survey described above, participants were asked to assess the impacts participation in the Alliances has had on their schools and on themselves. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive. All but three indicated that overall, they felt that participating in the Alliances "has had a positive impact" on their school. One person left it blank, one said no because his/her school had just joined a few weeks earlier and one teacher in a third year school said no because "most teachers are not aware of what is being done." The rest gave as reasons for their positive responses increased access to professional development, or mentioned specific strategies, or cited opportunities to share with other teachers in other schools. Others mentioned the less tangible changes in attitudes, or an increasing sense of professionalism or a greater willingness to change approaches to teaching.

Respondents were also asked if any activities they had done through the Alliance changed their teaching (or any other aspect of their work, if they were not teachers). They were asked to specify the changes, or indicate why they thought change might not have occurred. Although some of the administrators left it blank, here again, almost three fourths of the teachers (72.6% -- 53 of the 73 teachers who had usable responses in this category) felt they had seen impacts in their own teaching. They mentioned changes in use of portfolio assessment, interdisciplinary units, approaches to teaching reading, or math or science; increased use of cooperative learning, or different approaches to grouping. Some described the direct link between an Alliance activity and the change in their practice:

> Out of the brainstorming session [at job share meeting, I] developed a summer workshop on using literature across the disciplines. Read alouds were modeled which I use in my social studies classes now. (teacher in year 3 school)
>
> I have participated in a science job-alike session and used ideas presented there within my department --including books provided. (teacher in year 3 school)

Others describe the key impact of participating in Alliance activities as increasing their willingness to change their teaching. One teacher in year 3 school described the impact as simply, "the courage to change." Others talked

about being more receptive to, or having a more positive attitude toward change.

> [Participation] challenges my assumptions about how to organize middle level learning. (teacher in year 2 school)
>
> I am more positive, have received information and confidence to effect new techniques (teacher in year 2 school)
>
> I have a greater understanding of the middle school child and have more patience and understanding. (teacher in year 3 school)

It may be coincidence, but comments about attitudinal changes as impacts are more noticeable in years two and three, with most of the comments from teachers in year 1 schools focusing on specific approaches or techniques that were gained. Typical of this was the comment that high involvement of faculty "in both presenting and attending workshops has enhanced professionalism and helped us pursue and develop new skills." (year 3 teacher)

The survey ended by asking for overall comments and recommendations about the Alliances. When asked what was the best thing about the Regional Alliances, respondents most frequently identified some aspect of the opportunity to share with others -- sharing ideas, strategies, techniques. They welcomed the chance to find out what was going on in other schools. As one teacher in a first year school put it, "[It is] wonderful to hear great things about schools in our state and our own locality!" Several people commented on the quality of the programs, noting that this was "good professional development" that was up-to-date and delivered by the people who knew what they were doing and how to do it. The fact that the Alliances really value the role of teachers as planners and presenters is key for many: "Our Alliance sends the message that teachers need teachers --my belief is in this grass roots system." Having colleagues to share with meant that in addition to knowledge, one could get what one teacher in a 3rd year school referred to as "shoulders to cry on." One teacher in a first year school praised the "exceptional, eager, enthusiastic, informative, sharing, and friendly leadership." Other pointed to specific features of their Alliance -- mini-grants or job-alikes, for instance, as important features.

One teacher in a year 3 school summed up the sentiment of the overwhelming number of respondents by writing:

> This Alliance program is the best thing I've been involved in in my 23 years of teaching.

* * *

The Middle Grades Regional Alliance network is a significant contributor to the middle school reform movement. This case, however, is offered here primarily in its policy context. The Alliances serve a model for moving decisionmaking power about their own professional development into the hands of the people most affected. The Alliances have tapped a powerful wellspring of teacher interest and involvement and in doing so have helped the participating schools improve from within. The success of the Alliances have important policy implications for state departments of education and others seeking to improve schools by empowering the educators who work in them.

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